

# BIHARMONIC RIEMANNIAN SUBMERSIONS FROM THE PRODUCT SPACE $M^2 \times \mathbb{R}$

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## ABSTRACT

In this paper, we study biharmonic Riemannian submersions  $\pi : M^2 \times \mathbb{R} \rightarrow (N^2, h)$  from a product manifold onto a surface and obtain some local characterizations of such biharmonic maps. Our results show that when the target surface is flat, then a proper biharmonic Riemannian submersion  $\pi : M^2 \times \mathbb{R} \rightarrow (N^2, h)$  is locally a projection of a special twisted product, and when the target surface is non-flat,  $\pi$  is locally a special map between two warped product spaces with a warping function that solves a single ODE. As a by-product, we also prove that there is a unique proper biharmonic Riemannian submersion  $H^2 \times \mathbb{R} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^2$  given by the projection of a warped product.

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND PRELIMINARIES

A **harmonic map** is a map  $\varphi : (M, g) \rightarrow (N, h)$  between Riemannian manifolds whose tension field vanishes identically, i.e.,  $\tau(\varphi) = \text{Trace}_g \nabla d\varphi \equiv 0$ . A **biharmonic map** is one whose bitension field solves the PDEs

$$(1) \quad \tau_2(\varphi) := \text{Trace}_g(\nabla^\varphi \nabla^\varphi - \nabla_{\nabla_M}^\varphi) \tau(\varphi) - \text{Trace}_g R^N(d\varphi, \tau(\varphi)) d\varphi = 0,$$

where  $R^N$  is the curvature operator of  $(N, h)$  defined by

$$R^N(X, Y)Z = [\nabla_X^N, \nabla_Y^N]Z - \nabla_{[X, Y]}^N Z.$$

Clearly, any harmonic map is a biharmonic map. A biharmonic map which is not harmonic is called a **proper biharmonic map**.

The geometric study of biharmonic maps focuses on biharmonicity of maps with geometric interest like isometric immersions or Riemannian submersions,

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and the geometry and topology of the spaces related to the existence of such geometrically special biharmonic maps. For example, in the study of biharmonic submanifolds (biharmonic isometric immersions), a fundamental problem is to classify biharmonic submanifolds in certain model spaces. Although many progresses have been made the following conjectures remain open in general cases.

**Chen's Conjecture ([8]):** Any biharmonic submanifolds in Euclidean space is minimal.

**Conjecture (Balmus-Montaldo-Oniciuc [3]):** A biharmonic submanifold in sphere has constant mean curvature; and any proper biharmonic hypersurface in  $S^{m+1}$  is an open part of  $S^m(\frac{1}{\sqrt{2}})$  or the generalized Clifford torus  $S^p(\frac{1}{\sqrt{2}}) \times S^q(\frac{1}{\sqrt{2}})$  with  $p + q = m, p \neq q$ .

For more detailed information and some recent progress on biharmonic submanifolds see the recent book [19] and the vast references therein.

Riemannian submersions are a dual concept of isometric immersions (i.e., submanifolds). The study of biharmonicity of Riemannian submersions was initiated in [16]. A useful tool of using the so-called integrability data to study biharmonic Riemannian submersion from a generic 3-manifold was introduced in [21]. This was later generalized to higher dimensions with one dimensional fibers in [1]. Complete classifications of Riemannian submersions from a 3-dimensional space forms and more general BCV spaces into a surface were obtained in [21, 22].

In this paper, we study biharmonic submersions from the product space  $M^2 \times \mathbb{R}$ , where  $M^2$  is a general 2-dimensional manifold. A reason for the choice of the product space  $M^2 \times \mathbb{R}$  is that it includes many well-known model spaces, such as  $S^2 \times \mathbb{R}$ ,  $H^2 \times \mathbb{R}$ ,  $\mathbb{R}^3$ , and twisted spaces  $\mathbb{R}^2 \times_{e^{2p}} \mathbb{R} = (\mathbb{R}^3, dy^2 + dz^2 + e^{2p(x,y)} dx^2)$ . We give some local characterizations of biharmonic (including harmonic) Riemannian submersions from  $M^2 \times \mathbb{R}$  onto a surface. These include: a Riemannian submersion  $\pi : M^2 \times \mathbb{R} \rightarrow (N^2, h)$  is harmonic if and only if it is locally the projection onto the first factor followed by a Riemannian covering map (Theorem 2.2); A Riemannian submersion  $\pi : M^2 \times \mathbb{R} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^2$  is proper biharmonic, then it is locally a projection of a special twisted product (Theorem 2.9), and if a Riemannian submersion  $\pi : M^2 \times \mathbb{R} \rightarrow (N^2, h)$  into a non-flat surface is proper biharmonic, then  $\pi$  is locally a special map between two warped product spaces with a warping function that solves a single ODE (Corollary 2.10).

2. HARMONIC AND BIHARMONIC RIEMANNIAN SUBMERSIONS FROM  $M^2 \times \mathbb{R}$ 

We will use the following useful local orthonormal frame in the paper.

**Lemma 2.1.** *For any point on  $M^2 \times \mathbb{R}$ , there is a neighborhood  $U \times \mathbb{R}$  and local coordinates  $(t, s, z)$  such that the product metric on  $M^2 \times \mathbb{R}$  takes the form  $e^{2q(t,s)}dt^2 + ds^2 + dz^2$ . Furthermore, the orthonormal frame  $\{E_1 = e^{-q(t,s)}\partial_t, E_2 = \partial_s, E_3 = \partial_z\}$  satisfies*

$$(2) \quad \begin{aligned} [E_1, E_2] &= fE_1, \text{ all other } [E_i, E_j] = 0, \quad i, j = 1, 2, 3, \\ \nabla_{E_1}E_1 &= -fE_2, \quad \nabla_{E_1}E_2 = fE_1, \text{ all other } \nabla_{E_i}E_j = 0, \quad i, j = 1, 2, 3, \end{aligned}$$

where  $f = q_s$ , and the only possible nonzero components of the (Ricci) curvatures of  $M^2 \times \mathbb{R}$  are given by

$$(3) \quad \text{Ric}(E_1, E_1) = \text{Ric}(E_2, E_2) = R_{1212} = g(R(E_1, E_2)E_2, E_1) = -E_2(f) - f^2,$$

which is the Gauss curvature of  $M^2$  on  $U$  denoted by  $K^{M^2} = -E_2(f) - f^2$ .

*Proof.* It is well known that around any point of a 2-dimensional Riemannian manifold  $(M^2, g)$  there exists a semi-geodesic coordinate system so that locally it can be described as  $(U \subseteq M^2, g = e^{2q(t,s)}dt^2 + ds^2)$ . One can easily check that  $\{E_1 = e^{-q(t,s)}\partial_t, E_2 = \partial_s, E_3 = \partial_z\}$  is an orthonormal frame satisfies (2) and (3) with  $f = q_s$ .  $\square$

*Remark 1.* Note that the Lemma 2.1 actually implies that any local semi-geodesic coordinate system gives rise to an orthonormal frame  $\{E_i\}$  with the properties (2) and (3). For latter reference we call such an orthonormal frame *semi-geodesic orthonormal frame*.

Let  $\pi : M^2 \times \mathbb{R} \rightarrow (N^2, h)$  be a Riemannian submersion, and let  $\{e_1, e_2, e_3\}$  be a local orthonormal frame on  $W \subset M^2 \times \mathbb{R}$  with  $e_3$  vertical. Let  $\{f_1, f_2, f_3, \kappa_1, \kappa_2, \sigma\}$  be the generalized integrability associated to this frame. Note that  $f_3 = 0$  if and only if the above frame is adapted to  $\pi$ .

Using the relation  $e_i = \sum_{j=1}^3 a_i^j E_j$ , as it was computed in [22], we have the following Lie brackets and the components of the Levi-Civita connection with respect to this frame as

$$(4) \quad \begin{aligned} [e_1, e_3] &= f_3 e_2 + \kappa_1 e_3, \quad [e_2, e_3] = -f_3 e_1 + \kappa_2 e_3, \quad [e_1, e_2] = f_1 e_1 + f_2 e_2 - 2\sigma e_3, \\ \nabla_{e_1}e_1 &= -f_1 e_2, \quad \nabla_{e_1}e_2 = f_1 e_1 - \sigma e_3, \quad \nabla_{e_1}e_3 = \sigma e_2, \\ \nabla_{e_2}e_1 &= -f_2 e_2 + \sigma e_3, \quad \nabla_{e_2}e_2 = f_2 e_1, \quad \nabla_{e_2}e_3 = -\sigma e_1, \\ \nabla_{e_3}e_1 &= -\kappa_1 e_3 + (\sigma - f_3)e_2, \quad \nabla_{e_3}e_2 = -(\sigma - f_3)e_1 - \kappa_2 e_3, \quad \nabla_{e_3}e_3 = \kappa_1 e_1 + \kappa_2 e_2, \end{aligned}$$

and the only possible nonzero components of the Riemannian curvature  $R$  of  $M^2 \times \mathbb{R}$  as

$$(5) \quad \begin{cases} R(e_1, e_3, e_1, e_2) = -e_1(\sigma) + 2\kappa_1\sigma = -a_2^3 a_3^3 K^{M^2}, \\ R(e_1, e_3, e_1, e_3) = e_1(\kappa_1) + \sigma^2 - \kappa_1^2 + \kappa_2 f_1 = (a_2^3)^2 K^{M^2}, \\ R(e_1, e_3, e_2, e_3) = e_1(\kappa_2) - e_3(\sigma) - \kappa_1 f_1 - \kappa_1 \kappa_2 = -a_1^3 a_2^3 K^{M^2}, \\ R(e_1, e_2, e_1, e_2) = e_1(f_2) - e_2(f_1) - f_1^2 - f_2^2 + 2f_3\sigma - 3\sigma^2 = (a_3^3)^2 K^{M^2}, \\ R(e_1, e_2, e_2, e_3) = -e_2(\sigma) + 2\kappa_2\sigma = a_1^3 a_3^3 K^{M^2}, \\ R(e_2, e_3, e_1, e_3) = e_2(\kappa_1) + e_3(\sigma) + \kappa_2 f_2 - \kappa_1 \kappa_2 = -a_1^3 a_2^3 K^{M^2}, \\ R(e_2, e_3, e_2, e_3) = \sigma^2 + e_2(\kappa_2) - \kappa_1 f_2 - \kappa_2^2 = (a_1^3)^2 K^{M^2}. \end{cases}$$

Finally, the Gauss curvature of the base space is given by

$$(6) \quad K^N = e_1(f_2) - e_2(f_1) - f_1^2 - f_2^2 + 2f_3\sigma.$$

*Remark 2.* From (4) we see that  $\sigma = 0$  on the neighborhood  $W$  if and only if the horizontal distribution of the Riemannian submersion  $\pi$  on  $W$  is integrable.

**2.1. Harmonic Riemannian submersions from  $M^2 \times \mathbb{R}$ .** Harmonic Riemannian submersions  $M^3 \rightarrow N^2$  are a special subclass of horizontally homothetic harmonic morphisms with totally geodesic fibers. For general harmonic morphisms and their applications and interesting links to other areas of mathematics see the book [4]. It is well known that the only Riemannian submersion from  $S^3$  is the Hopf fibration  $S^3 \rightarrow S^2$  which is harmonic since the fibers are totally geodesic. Using the Bernstein theorem for harmonic morphism (see Baird-Wood [5]), one can easily deduce (see also [21]) that there is no harmonic Riemannian submersion  $H^3 \rightarrow (N^2, h)$  from a 3-dimensional hyperbolic space form, and that any globally defined harmonic Riemannian submersion  $\phi : \mathbb{R}^3 \rightarrow (N^2, h)$  is an orthogonal projection  $\mathbb{R}^3 \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^2$  followed by a Riemannian covering map  $\mathbb{R}^2 \rightarrow (N^2, h)$ . For some recent work on the classifications of harmonic Riemannian submersions from Thurston's 3-dimensional geometries, BCV 3-spaces, and Berger 3-spheres see [23]. In this subsection, we study harmonic Riemannian submersions from  $M^2 \times \mathbb{R}$ .

**Theorem 2.2.** *A Riemannian submersion  $\pi : M^2 \times \mathbb{R} \rightarrow (N^2, h)$  is harmonic if and only if locally it is, up to an isometry of the domain, the projection onto the first factor followed by a Riemannian covering map.*

*Proof.* By Lemma 2.1, for any point on  $M^2 \times \mathbb{R}$ , there is a neighborhood  $W = U \times \mathbb{R}$  on which we have an orthonormal frame  $\{E_i\}$ . Let  $e_i = \sum_{j=1}^3 a_i^j E_j$  be a local orthonormal frame with  $e_3$  vertical. Using Proposition 2.2 in [23] and (5),

we conclude that if the Riemannian submersion  $\pi : M^2 \times \mathbb{R} \supseteq W \rightarrow (N^2, h)$  is harmonic, then we have

$$(7) \quad \sigma^2 = (a_2^3)^2 K^{M^2} = (a_1^3)^2 K^{M^2}, \quad a_1^3 a_2^3 K^{M^2} = 0, \quad \text{and} \quad K^N = 3\sigma^2 + (a_3^3)^2 K^{M^2}.$$

By continuity of  $K^{M^2}$ , we may assume that either  $K^{M^2} \equiv 0$  or  $K^{M^2} \neq 0$  on a neighborhood denoted by  $W$  by an abuse of notation. For the first case, (7) implies that  $\sigma = 0$ , and  $K^N = K^{M^2} = 0$  on  $W$ . For the second case, we use  $K^{M^2} \neq 0$  on  $W$  together with the 1st and the 2nd equation of (7) to conclude that  $a_1^3 = a_2^3 = 0$  and hence  $(a_3^3)^2 = 1$ , which also implies that  $\sigma = 0$  and hence the Gauss curvature of the base space  $K^N = \sigma^2 + (a_3^3)^2 K^{M^2} = (a_3^3)^2 K^{M^2} = K^{M^2}$ . Thus, in either case, we have  $\sigma = 0$  on a neighborhood  $W$  which means the Riemannian submersion  $\pi : M^2 \times \mathbb{R} \supseteq W \rightarrow (N^2, h)$  has integrable horizontal distribution. This, together with the assumption that  $\pi|_W$  is harmonic and hence it has totally geodesic fibers, implies that  $\pi|_W$  is a Riemannian submersion with totally geodesic fibers and integrable horizontal distribution whose integral submanifold is an open neighborhood  $U$  of  $M^2$  that is isometric to an open neighborhood of  $(N^2, h)$ . Therefore,  $\pi|_W$  is the projection along the fibers onto  $U$  followed by a Riemannian covering map onto  $V \subset N^2$ .  $\square$

**2.2. Biharmonic Riemannian submersions from  $M^2 \times \mathbb{R}$ .** In this subsection, we will characterize all proper biharmonic Riemannian submersions from  $M^2 \times \mathbb{R}$ , which are not harmonic.

We will use the following lemma in the rest of the paper.

**Lemma 2.3.** ([21]) *Let  $\pi : (M^3, g) \rightarrow (N^2, h)$  be a Riemannian submersion with an adapted frame  $\{e_1, e_2, e_3\}$  and the integrability data  $f_1, f_2, \kappa_1, \kappa_2$  and  $\sigma$ . Then, the Riemannian submersion  $\pi$  is biharmonic if and only if*

$$(8) \quad \begin{cases} -\Delta^M \kappa_1 - 2 \sum_{i=1}^2 f_i e_i(\kappa_2) - \kappa_2 \sum_{i=1}^2 (e_i(f_i) - \kappa_i f_i) + \kappa_1 \left( -K^N + \sum_{i=1}^2 f_i^2 \right) = 0, \\ -\Delta^M \kappa_2 + 2 \sum_{i=1}^2 f_i e_i(\kappa_1) + \kappa_1 \sum_{i=1}^2 (e_i(f_i) - \kappa_i f_i) + \kappa_2 \left( -K^N + \sum_{i=1}^2 f_i^2 \right) = 0, \end{cases}$$

where  $K^N = R_{1212}^N \circ \pi = e_1(f_2) - e_2(f_1) - f_1^2 - f_2^2$  is the Gauss curvature of  $(N^2, h)$ .

**Lemma 2.4.** (see [22]) *Let  $\pi : (M^3, g) \rightarrow (N^2, h)$  be a Riemannian submersion from Riemannian 3-manifolds and  $\{e_1, e_2, e_3\}$  be any local orthonormal frame with  $e_3$  tangent to the fibers. If  $\nabla_{e_1} e_1 = 0$ , then either  $\nabla_{e_2} e_2 = 0$ ; or  $\nabla_{e_2} e_2 \neq 0$ , and the frame  $\{e_1, e_2, e_3\}$  is adapted to the Riemannian submersion  $\pi$ .*

The main tool used to prove our main theorems is a special orthonormal frame adapted to the Riemannian submersion. First we prove the existence of such frame.

**Proposition 2.5.** *Let  $\pi : M^2 \times \mathbb{R} \rightarrow (N^2, h)$  be a Riemannian submersion and  $\{E_1, E_2, E_3 = \frac{\partial}{\partial z}\}$  be a local semi-geodesic orthonormal frame stated in Lemma 2.1. Then, there exists an orthonormal frame*

$$(9) \quad \begin{cases} e_1 = \cos \theta E_1 + \sin \theta E_2, \\ e_2 = -\cos \alpha (\sin \theta E_1 - \cos \theta E_2) + \sin \alpha E_3, \\ e_3 = \sin \alpha (\sin \theta E_1 - \cos \theta E_2) + \cos \alpha E_3, \end{cases}$$

such that  $e_3$  is vertical,  $\nabla_{e_1} e_1 = 0$ , where  $\cos \theta = \langle e_1, E_1 \rangle$ ,  $\cos \alpha = \langle e_3, E_3 \rangle$ . Furthermore, the generalized integrability data of  $\{e_i\}$  are given by

$$(10) \quad \begin{aligned} f_1 &= 0, \quad f_2 = -\bar{f} \cos^2 \alpha - \sin \alpha \cos \alpha E_3(\theta), \quad f_3 = -E_3(\theta), \\ \sigma &= -\bar{f} \sin \alpha \cos \alpha - \sin^2 \alpha E_3(\theta), \quad \kappa_1 = -\bar{f} \sin^2 \alpha + \sin \alpha \cos \alpha E_3(\theta), \\ \kappa_2 &= \sin \alpha e_3(\cos \alpha) - \cos \alpha e_3(\sin \alpha) = -e_3(\alpha), \end{aligned}$$

where

$$(11) \quad \bar{f} = -\sin \theta E_1(\theta) + \cos \theta E_2(\theta) + f \sin \theta.$$

*Proof.* Let  $e_3$  be the unit vector field tangent to the fibers of  $\pi$ . Clearly, if  $e_3 = \pm E_3$ , then  $e_1 = E_2, e_2 = -E_1, e_3 = E_3$  is such an orthonormal frame.

Hereafter, we suppose that  $e_3 \neq \pm E_3 = \pm \frac{\partial}{\partial z}$ . In this case, we take  $e_1 = \frac{e_3 \times E_3}{|e_3 \times E_3|}$  which is horizontal since  $\langle e_1, e_3 \rangle = 0$ , and obtain a natural orthonormal frame  $\{e_1, e_2 = e_3 \times e_1, e_3\}$  on  $M^2 \times \mathbb{R}$  which can be expressed as

$$(12) \quad e_i = \sum_{j=1}^3 a_i^j E_j, \quad i = 1, 2, 3, \quad (a_i^j) \in SO(3).$$

By the choices  $e_i$ , we have

$$(13) \quad a_1^3 = \langle e_1, E_3 \rangle = 0, \quad a_3^3 \neq \pm 1, \quad (\text{and hence}) \quad a_2^3 \neq 0,$$

and hence  $e_1 = a_1^1 E_1 + a_1^2 E_2$  with  $(a_1^1)^2 + (a_1^2)^2 = 1$ .

Furthermore, we can check that

$$(14) \quad f_1 = 0, \quad \nabla_{e_1} e_1 = 0.$$

In fact, a straightforward computation using (4) gives

$$(15) \quad -f_1 \sum_{i=1}^3 a_2^i E_i = -f_1 e_2 = \nabla_{e_1} e_1 = \nabla_{e_1} \left( \sum_{i=1}^3 a_1^i E_i \right) = \sum_{i=1}^3 e_1(a_1^i) E_i + \sum_{i,j=1}^3 a_1^j a_1^i \nabla_{E_j} E_i.$$

Using (2), the fact that  $a_1^3 = 0$ , and comparing the coefficient of  $E_3$  on both sides of (15) yields  $-f_1 a_2^3 = e_1(a_1^3) = 0$ . From this we obtain  $f_1 = 0$  since  $a_2^3 \neq 0$ , and hence  $\nabla_{e_1} e_1 = 0$ .

It is not difficult to check that

$$(16) \quad \bar{E}_1 = a_1^2 E_1 - a_1^1 E_2, \quad \bar{E}_2 = a_1^1 E_1 + a_1^2 E_2, \quad \bar{E}_3 = E_3$$

defines another orthonormal frame on  $U \times \mathbb{R} \subseteq M^2 \times \mathbb{R}$  which satisfies

$$(17) \quad \begin{aligned} [\bar{E}_1, \bar{E}_3] &= \bar{f}_3 \bar{E}_2, \quad [\bar{E}_2, \bar{E}_3] = -\bar{f}_3 \bar{E}_1, \quad [\bar{E}_1, \bar{E}_2] = \bar{f} \bar{E}_1, \\ \nabla_{\bar{E}_1} \bar{E}_1 &= -\bar{f} \bar{E}_2, \quad \nabla_{\bar{E}_1} \bar{E}_2 = \bar{f} \bar{E}_1, \quad \nabla_{\bar{E}_3} \bar{E}_1 = -\bar{f}_3 \bar{E}_2, \quad \nabla_{\bar{E}_3} \bar{E}_2 = \bar{f}_3 \bar{E}_1, \\ \text{all other } \nabla_{\bar{E}_i} \bar{E}_j &= 0, \quad i, j = 1, 2, 3, \end{aligned}$$

with

$$(18) \quad \bar{f} = E_1(a_1^1) + E_2(a_1^2) + f a_1^2, \quad \bar{f}_3 = a_1^2 E_3(a_1^1) - a_1^1 E_3(a_1^2),$$

and the only possible nonzero components of the (Ricci) curvatures given by

$$\text{Ric}(\bar{E}_1, \bar{E}_1) = \text{Ric}(\bar{E}_2, \bar{E}_2) = R_{1212} = g(R(\bar{E}_1, \bar{E}_2)\bar{E}_2, \bar{E}_1) = -\bar{E}_2(\bar{f}) - \bar{f}^2,$$

which is the Gauss curvature of  $M^2$  on  $U$  denoted by  $K^{M^2} = -\bar{E}_2(\bar{f}) - \bar{f}^2$ .

We can also check that by introducing the new variables  $\theta, \alpha$  so that

$$(19) \quad a_1^1 = \cos \theta, \quad a_1^2 = \sin \theta, \quad a_2^3 = \sin \alpha, \quad a_3^3 = \cos \alpha,$$

we can rewrite (16) and (12), respectively, as

$$(20) \quad \bar{E}_1 = \sin \theta E_1 - \cos \theta E_2, \quad \bar{E}_2 = \cos \theta E_1 + \sin \theta E_2, \quad \bar{E}_3 = E_3,$$

$$(21) \quad \begin{cases} e_1 = \cos \theta E_1 + \sin \theta E_2, \\ e_2 = -\cos \alpha (\sin \theta E_1 - \cos \theta E_2) + \sin \alpha E_3, \\ e_3 = \sin \alpha (\sin \theta E_1 - \cos \theta E_2) + \cos \alpha E_3, \end{cases}$$

where

$$(22) \quad \begin{cases} a_1^1 = \cos \theta, \quad a_1^2 = \sin \theta, \quad a_1^3 = 0, \\ a_2^1 = -\cos \alpha \sin \theta, \quad a_2^2 = \cos \alpha \cos \theta, \quad a_2^3 = \sin \alpha, \\ a_3^1 = \sin \alpha \sin \theta, \quad a_3^2 = -\sin \alpha \cos \theta, \quad a_3^3 = \cos \alpha. \end{cases}$$

It is also clear that the relationship between the orthonormal frames  $\{e_i\}$  and  $\{\bar{E}_i\}$  is given by

$$(23) \quad e_1 = \bar{E}_2, \quad e_2 = -\cos \alpha \bar{E}_1 + \sin \alpha E_3, \quad e_3 = \sin \alpha \bar{E}_1 + \cos \alpha E_3.$$

To compute the integrability data of the frame  $\{e_1, e_2, e_3\}$ , we first use (2), (4),  $a_1^3 = f_1 = 0$ , and a computation similar to those used to obtain (15), to have

$$(24) \quad \begin{aligned} e_1(a_2^3) &= -\sigma a_3^3, \quad e_1(a_3^3) = \sigma a_2^3, \quad e_2(a_2^3) = 0, \quad e_2(a_3^3) = 0, \\ e_3(a_2^3) &= -\kappa_2 a_3^3, \quad e_3(a_3^3) = \kappa_2 a_2^3, \quad \kappa_1 a_3^3 = (\sigma - f_3) a_2^3, \quad f_2 a_2^3 = \sigma a_3^3, \\ e_1(a_1^1) &= -a_1^1 a_1^2 f, \quad e_1(a_1^2) = (a_1^1)^2 f. \end{aligned}$$

Using (2), (23), (17), the 1st and the 2nd equations of (24) we have

$$(25) \quad \begin{aligned} f_3 e_2 + \kappa_1 e_3 &= [e_1, e_3] = [e_1, \sin \alpha \bar{E}_1 + \cos \alpha E_3] \\ &= (\sigma + \bar{f} \sin \alpha \cos \alpha - \cos^2 \alpha E_3(\theta)) e_2 + (-\bar{f} \sin^2 \alpha + \sin \alpha \cos \alpha E_3(\theta)) e_3. \end{aligned}$$

Comparing coefficients on both sides of (25) yields

$$(26) \quad f_3 = \sigma + \bar{f} \sin \alpha \cos \alpha - \cos^2 \alpha E_3(\theta), \quad \kappa_1 = -\bar{f} \sin^2 \alpha + \sin \alpha \cos \alpha E_3(\theta).$$

Similarly, by computing

$$(27) \quad \begin{aligned} f_2 e_2 - 2\sigma e_3 &= [e_1, e_2] = [e_1, -\cos \alpha \bar{E}_1 + \sin \alpha E_3] \\ &= (-\bar{f} \cos^2 \alpha - \sin \alpha \cos \alpha E_3(\theta)) e_2 + (-\sigma + \bar{f} \sin \alpha \cos \alpha + \sin^2 \alpha E_3(\theta)) e_3, \end{aligned}$$

and comparing coefficients on both sides of this equation, we have

$$(28) \quad \sigma = -\bar{f} \sin \alpha \cos \alpha - \sin^2 \alpha E_3(\theta), \quad f_2 = -\bar{f} \cos^2 \alpha - \sin \alpha \cos \alpha E_3(\theta).$$

Using the 1st equation of (26) and the 1st equation of (28), we obtain

$$(29) \quad f_3 = -E_3(\theta) = \sin \theta E_3(\cos \theta) - \cos \theta E_3(\sin \theta) = a_1^2 E_3(a_1^1) - a_1^1 E_3(a_1^2).$$

Using the 5th and 6th equation of (24), a simple computation yields

$$(30) \quad \kappa_2 = \sin \alpha e_3(\cos \alpha) - \cos \alpha e_3(\sin \alpha) = -e_3(\alpha).$$

From (14), (26), (28), (29), and (30), we obtain the integrability data (10).  $\square$

Now we are ready to prove the following theorem which provides the main tool to prove our classification theorems.

**Theorem 2.6.** *Let  $\pi : M^2 \times \mathbb{R} \rightarrow (N^2, h)$  be a Riemannian submersion. Then, the orthonormal frame  $\{e_i\}$  given by (9) is adapted to the Riemannian submersion  $\pi$  with the integrability data*

$$(31) \quad f_1 = 0, \quad f_2 = -\bar{f} \cos^2 \alpha, \quad f_3 = 0, \quad \sigma = -\bar{f} \sin \alpha \cos \alpha, \quad \kappa_1 = -\bar{f} \sin^2 \alpha, \quad \kappa_2 = -e_3(\alpha).$$

*Proof.* By Proposition 2.5, we have  $\nabla_{e_1} e_1 = 0$ . Thus, we can use Lemma 2.4 to conclude that either  $\nabla_{e_2} e_2 \neq 0$  in which case the chosen frame  $\{e_1, e_2, e_3\}$  is adapted to the Riemannian submersion  $\pi$ , or  $\nabla_{e_2} e_2 = 0$ . So, it suffices to prove that the orthonormal frame is also adapted in the latter case:  $\nabla_{e_2} e_2 = 0$ , i.e.,  $f_2 = 0$ . Using the assumptions (13),  $f_2 = 0$ , the 2nd and the 8th equations of (24)



we obtain  $\sigma = 0$ . Then, using the 4th equation of (5) with  $f_1 = f_2 = \sigma = a_1^3 = 0$ , we have either  $K^{M^2} = 0$ , or  $a_3^3 = 0$  and hence  $(a_2^3)^2 = 1$ .

For the case of  $a_3^3 = 0$  and  $(a_2^3)^2 = 1$ , one applies the 7th equation of (24) with  $\sigma = 0$  to conclude that  $f_3 = 0$ , which implies that the chosen frame  $\{e_1 = a_1^1 E_1 + a_1^2 E_2, e_2, e_3\}$  is adapted to the Riemannian submersion.

For the case  $K^{M^2} = 0$  and  $a_3^3 \neq 0, \pm 1$  (and hence  $a_2^3 \neq 0, \pm 1$ ), we will prove that  $f_3 = 0$  and hence the orthonormal frame  $\{e_i\}$  is adapted to  $\pi$ .

First, we note that the orthonormal frame  $\{\bar{E}_i\}$  given in (16) is a natural orthonormal frame with respect to the harmonic Riemannian submersion

$$\pi_1 : M^2 \times \mathbb{R} \rightarrow M^2, \pi_1(p, z) = p.$$

By comparing the equations on the first line of (17) with those of (4) and using (29) and the second equation of (18), we find the generalized integrability data of  $\{\bar{E}_i\}$  to be

$$(32) \quad \bar{f}_1 = \bar{f}, \bar{f}_2 = \bar{\kappa}_1 = \bar{\kappa}_2 = \bar{\sigma} = 0, \bar{f}_3 = f_3 = -E_3(\theta).$$

Applying Lemma 2.4 with  $e_1 = \bar{E}_2, e_2 = \bar{E}_1$ , we deduce that either  $\bar{f}_1 = \bar{f} \neq 0$  in which case the orthonormal frame  $\{\bar{E}_i\}$  is adapted to the Riemannian submersion  $\pi_1$ , and hence  $\bar{f}_3 = f_3 = 0$ , or  $\bar{f}_1 = \bar{f} = 0$ . For the latter case, we use the assumptions  $\bar{f}_1 = \bar{f} = 0$ , together with  $a_3^3 \neq 0, \pm 1$  (and hence  $a_2^3 \neq 0, \pm 1$ ),  $\sigma = f_2 = 0$  and (28) to have  $f_3 = -E_3(\theta) = 0$ . Thus, in any case, the frame  $\{e_i\}$  is adapted to the Riemannian submersion  $\pi$ , and the generalized integrability data (10) reduces to the integrability data (31).  $\square$

**Corollary 2.7.** *A biharmonic Riemannian submersion  $\pi : M^2 \times \mathbb{R} \rightarrow (N^2, h)$  with  $K^{M^2} = K^N = 0$  has to be harmonic.*

*Proof.* By Theorem 2.6, the orthonormal frame  $\{e_i\}$  is adapted to the Riemannian submersion  $\pi$  with the integrability data (31). Using the 4th equation of (5) and the assumption that  $K^{M^2} = K^N = 0$ , we have  $\sigma = 0$ . From this and the 4th equation of (31), we have either  $\bar{f} = 0$  or  $\sin \alpha \cos \alpha = 0$ . Therefore, we can obtain our corollary by the following cases:

Case I:  $\bar{f} = 0$  and  $a_2^3 a_3^3 = \sin \alpha \cos \alpha \neq 0$ . Combining these, (31), and the assumption that  $K^{M^2} = K^N = 0$  we have

$$(33) \quad a_1^1 = f_1 = f_2 = f_3 = \sigma = \kappa_1 = K^{M^2} = K^N = 0, a_2^3, a_3^3 \neq 0, \pm 1, \kappa_2 = -e_3(\alpha).$$

Using (33) and (5) we obtain

$$(34) \quad e_2(\kappa_2) = \kappa_2^2, \quad e_1(\kappa_2) = 0.$$

Thus, in this case, if  $\pi$  is biharmonic with  $K^N = 0$ , then we have (4), (33), (34), and the biharmonic equation (8) reduces to

$$(35) \quad \Delta \kappa_2 = 0,$$

and hence

$$(36) \quad e_3 e_3(\kappa_2) = -\kappa_2^3.$$

Applying  $e_2$  to both sides of (36) we have

$$(37) \quad e_2 e_3 e_3(\kappa_2) = -3\kappa_2^4.$$

On the other hand, we use (4) and  $e_2 e_3(\kappa_2) - e_3 e_2(\kappa_2) = [e_2, e_3](\kappa_2) = \kappa_2 e_3(\kappa_2)$  to obtain

$$(38) \quad e_2 e_3(\kappa_2) = 3\kappa_2 e_3(\kappa_2).$$

By applying  $e_3$  to both sides of (38) and using (36) we get

$$(39) \quad e_3 e_2 e_3(\kappa_2) = 3(e_3(\kappa_2))^2 - 3\kappa_2^4.$$

A further computation using (37) and (39) gives

$$(40) \quad \begin{aligned} \kappa_2 e_3(e_3(\kappa_2)) &= [e_2, e_3](e_3(\kappa_2)) \\ &= e_2 e_3 e_3(\kappa_2) - e_3 e_2 e_3(\kappa_2) = -3(e_3(\kappa_2))^2. \end{aligned}$$

This, together with (36), implies

$$(41) \quad 3(e_3(\kappa_2))^2 = \kappa_2^4,$$

Applying  $e_3$  to both sides of (41) and using (36) we get

$$(42) \quad 10\kappa_2^3 e_3(\kappa_2) = 0,$$

which implies either  $\kappa_2 = 0$  or  $e_3(\kappa_2) = 0$ . For the latter case, we use (41) to obtain  $\kappa_2 = 0$ . So in any case, the Riemannian submersion  $\pi$  is harmonic since  $\kappa_1 = \kappa_2 = 0$ .

Case II:  $a_3^3 = \cos \alpha = 0$  and  $a_2^3 = \sin \alpha = \pm 1$ . In this case, (31) reduces to

$$(43) \quad f_1 = f_2 = f_3 = \sigma = \kappa_2 = 0, \quad \kappa_1 = -\bar{f}.$$

Using these and (5) we have

$$(44) \quad e_1(\kappa_1) = \kappa_1^2, \quad e_2(\kappa_1) = 0.$$

It follows that in this case, we can use (4), (43), (44) and  $K^N = 0$  to conclude that the biharmonic equation (8) reduces to

$$(45) \quad \Delta \kappa_1 = 0.$$

We make a computation similar to those used to compute (36)-(42) in Case I to have  $\kappa_1 = 0$ . So  $\pi$  is harmonic since  $\kappa_1 = \kappa_2 = 0$ .

Case III:  $a_3^3 = \cos \alpha = \pm 1$  and  $\sin \alpha = 0$ . In this case, using the 5th and 6th equations of (31) we have  $\kappa_1 = \kappa_2 = 0$  implying that the Riemannian submersion  $\pi$  is harmonic.

Summarizing all the above cases we obtain the corollary.

□

Now we are ready to give a first characterization of proper biharmonic Riemannian submersions from  $M^2 \times \mathbb{R}$ .

**Theorem 2.8.** *Let  $\pi : M^2 \times \mathbb{R} \rightarrow (N^2, h)$  be a proper biharmonic Riemannian submersion. Then we have*

(a) *The target surface is flat, and the adapted frame (9) has the integrability data  $f_1 = f_2 = \kappa_2 = \sigma = 0$ ,  $\kappa_1 = -\bar{f} \neq 0$  solving the following PDE*

$$(46) \quad \Delta \kappa_1 = 0, \text{ i.e., } \Delta^{M^2} \bar{f} = 0,$$

*where  $\Delta^{M^2}$  denotes the Laplacian of  $M^2$  and  $\bar{f} = -\sin \theta E_1(\theta) + \cos \theta E_2(\theta) + f \sin \theta$  is a function on  $U \subseteq M^2$ , or,*

(b) *The target surface is non-flat, and the adapted frame (9) has the integrability data*

$$(47) \quad f_1 = \kappa_2 = 0, \quad f_2 = -\bar{f} \cos^2 \alpha, \quad \kappa_1 = -\bar{f} \sin^2 \alpha, \quad \sigma = -\bar{f} \sin \alpha \cos \alpha$$

*satisfying  $f_2 \kappa_1 \sigma \neq 0$ ,  $K^N = e_1(f_2) - f_2^2 \neq 0$ ,  $\sigma = -e_1(\alpha)$ ,  $e_i(f_2) = e_i(\kappa_1) = e_i(\sigma) = e_i(K^{M^2}) = e_i(\bar{f}) = e_i(\alpha) = 0$ ,  $i = 2, 3$ , and  $\kappa_1$  solving the following PDE*

$$(48) \quad \Delta \kappa_1 - \kappa_1 \{-K^N + f_2^2\} = 0,$$

*which is equivalent to*

$$(49) \quad \alpha''' \sin \alpha \cos^2 \alpha + \cos \alpha (\sin^2 \alpha + 3) \alpha' \alpha'' + \sin \alpha (2 \cos^2 \alpha + 3) \alpha'^3 = 0,$$

*where  $\alpha'$ ,  $\alpha''$  and  $\alpha'''$  denote the first, the second and the third derivative of  $\alpha$  along the vector field  $e_1$ .*

*Proof.* By Theorem 2.6, the local orthonormal frame given by (9) is adapted to the Riemannian submersion  $\pi$  with  $e_3$  being vertical and the integrability data given by

$$(50) \quad \begin{cases} f_1 = 0, f_2 = -\bar{f} \cos^2 \alpha, f_3 = -E_3(\theta) = 0, \sigma = -\bar{f} \sin \alpha \cos \alpha, \\ \kappa_1 = -\bar{f} \sin^2 \alpha, \kappa_2 = \sin \alpha e_3(\cos \alpha) - \cos \alpha e_3(\sin \alpha) = -e_3(\alpha). \end{cases}$$

We may assume that  $\cos \alpha = a_3^3 \neq \pm 1$ , for otherwise  $e_3 = \pm E_3$ ,  $\pi$  is the projection  $M^2 \times \mathbb{R} \rightarrow M^2$  followed by a Riemannian covering map and hence  $\pi$  is harmonic. The rest of the proof will be done by considering the following three cases.

Case I:  $a_3^3 = \cos \alpha = 0$ . In this case, it follows from (50) that  $f_1 = f_2 = \kappa_2 = \sigma = 0$ ,  $\kappa_1 = -\bar{f} \neq 0$ . From these and (6), we conclude that  $N^2$  has Gauss curvature  $K^N = 0$  and hence it is a flat surface. Therefore, biharmonic equation (8) turns into

$$\Delta \kappa_1 = 0.$$

It is easy to see that the above equation is equivalent to  $\Delta^{M^2} \bar{f} = 0$  since  $E_3 \theta = 0$  and hence  $E_3 \bar{f} = 0$  and  $\Delta \bar{f} = \Delta^{M^2} \bar{f} + E_3 E_3 \bar{f} = \Delta^{M^2} \bar{f}$ .

Case II:  $a_3^3 = \cos \alpha \neq 0, \pm 1$  and  $f_2 = 0$ . In this case, the second equation of (50) implies that  $\bar{f} = 0$ , and hence we have  $f_1 = f_2 = f_3 = \kappa_1 = \sigma = K^{M^2} = K^N = 0$ . Thus, we apply Corollary 2.7 to conclude that the biharmonic Riemannian submersion is harmonic in this case.

Case III:  $a_3^3 = \cos \alpha \neq 0, \pm 1$  and  $f_2 \neq 0$ . In this case, the hypotheses can be summarized as:

$$(51) \quad a_2^3, a_3^3 \neq 0, \pm 1, f_2 \neq 0, a_1^3 = f_1 = f_3 = 0, e_3(f_1) = e_3(f_2) = 0.$$

**Claim 1:** In this case, we have  $\kappa_2 = 0$ ,  $e_2(\bar{f}) = e_3(\bar{f}) = e_2(f_2) = e_3(f_2) = e_2(\kappa_1) = e_3(\kappa_1) = e_2(\sigma) = e_3(\sigma) = e_2(K^{M^2}) = e_3(K^{M^2}) = e_2(\alpha) = e_3(\alpha) = 0$ ,  $\kappa_1 \sigma \neq 0$ , and  $\alpha' = -\sigma = \bar{f} \sin \alpha \cos \alpha$ , where  $\alpha'$  denotes the first derivative of  $\alpha$  along  $e_1 = \bar{E}_2$ .

**Proof of Claim 1:** Firstly, we use (51), the 7th and the 8th equation of (24) to have  $\kappa_1 \sigma \neq 0$ .

Secondly, by using (50) and the last equation of (51), we have  $e_3(-\cos^2 \alpha \bar{f}) = e_3(f_2) = 0$  and hence

$$(52) \quad e_3(\kappa_1) = e_3(-\sin^2 \alpha \bar{f}) = e_3[-(1 - \cos^2 \alpha) \bar{f}] = -e_3(\bar{f}).$$

We use (50), the 5th and the 7th equation of (5) with  $a_1^3 = 0$  to obtain

$$(53) \quad \sigma^2 = \kappa_1 f_2, e_2(\kappa_2) = \kappa_2^2, e_2(\sigma) = 2\kappa_2 \sigma.$$

On the other hand, note that  $a_2^3 = \sin \alpha$ ,  $a_3^3 = \cos \alpha$ , a straightforward computation using the 6th equation of (24) gives

$$0 = e_3(f_2) = e_3(-\cos^2 \alpha \bar{f}) = -2\kappa_2 \sin \alpha \cos \alpha \bar{f} - \cos^2 \alpha e_3(\bar{f}).$$

It follows that

$$(54) \quad e_3(\bar{f}) = \frac{-2\kappa_2 \sin \alpha \cos \alpha \bar{f}}{\cos^2 \alpha} = \frac{2\kappa_2 \sigma}{\cos^2 \alpha}.$$

Using (52), (54), the 1st equation of (53) and the 3rd equation of (5) with  $a_1^3 = f_1 = 0$ , we obtain

$$(55) \quad \begin{aligned} e_3(\sigma) &= \frac{e_3(\sigma^2)}{2\sigma} = \frac{f_2 e_3(\kappa_1)}{2\sigma} = \kappa_2 \bar{f}, \\ e_1(\kappa_2) &= e_3(\sigma) + \kappa_1 \kappa_2 = \kappa_2 \bar{f} - \kappa_2 \sin^2 \alpha \bar{f} = \kappa_2 \cos^2 \alpha \bar{f} = -\kappa_2 f_2. \end{aligned}$$

On the other hand, using  $e_2(\cos \alpha) = e_2(\sin \alpha) = 0$ ,  $\bar{f} = -\frac{\sigma}{\sin \alpha \cos \alpha}$  and  $e_2(\sigma) = 2\kappa_2 \sigma$  and a simple computation we have

$$(56) \quad \begin{aligned} e_2(\bar{f}) &= -\frac{e_2(\sigma)}{\sin \alpha \cos \alpha} = \frac{-2\kappa_2 \sigma}{\sin \alpha \cos \alpha} = 2\kappa_2 \bar{f}, \\ e_2(f_2) &= e_2(-\cos^2 \alpha \bar{f}) = -\cos^2 \alpha e_2(\bar{f}) = -2\kappa_2 \cos^2 \alpha \bar{f} = 2\kappa_2 f_2, \\ e_2(\kappa_1) &= e_2(-\sin^2 \alpha \bar{f}) = -\sin^2 \alpha e_2(\bar{f}) = -2\kappa_2 \sin^2 \alpha \bar{f} = 2\kappa_1 \kappa_2. \end{aligned}$$

Note that  $\kappa_2 e_3(f_2) = [e_2, e_3](f_2) = e_2 e_3(f_2) - e_3 e_2(f_2)$ , a further computation using (56) gives  $0 = -e_3(2\kappa_2 f_2) = -f_2 e_3(\kappa_2)$ , which, together with  $f_2 \neq 0$ , implies that

$$(57) \quad e_3(\kappa_2) = 0.$$

Applying the 2nd equation of biharmonic equations (8) and using (4), (53), (55), (56), (57) and (6) with  $f_1 = f_3 = 0$ , we have

$$(58) \quad \begin{aligned} 0 &= -\Delta \kappa_2 + 2f_2 e_2(\kappa_1) + \kappa_1 e_2(f_2) - \kappa_1 \kappa_2 f_2 + \kappa_2 \{-K^N + f_2^2\} \\ &= \sum_{i=1}^3 \{-e_i e_i(\kappa_2) + \nabla_{e_i} e_i(\kappa_2)\} + 4\kappa_1 \kappa_2 f_2 + 2\kappa_1 \kappa_2 f_2 - \kappa_1 \kappa_2 f_2 + \kappa_2 \{-e_1(f_2) + 2f_2^2\} \\ &= -\kappa_2^3 + 4\kappa_1 \kappa_2 f_2 = \kappa_2(-\kappa_2^2 + 4\kappa_1 f_2) = \kappa_2(-\kappa_2^2 + 4\sigma^2). \end{aligned}$$

Solving (58) we must have  $\kappa_2 = 0$  and  $\kappa_2^2 \neq 4\sigma^2$ . Indeed, if  $\kappa_2^2 = 4\sigma^2$ , then using (57), we have  $4e_3(\sigma^2) = e_3(\kappa_2^2) = 0$  and hence  $e_3(\sigma) = 0$ . But since  $\bar{f} \neq 0$  and (55), we further have  $\kappa_2 = 0$  and hence  $4\sigma^2 = \kappa_2^2 = 0$ , a contradiction, since  $\sigma \neq 0$ . Therefore, a straightforward computation using (52)–(56), the 5th, the 6th equation of (24) gives

$$(59) \quad e_2(\bar{f}) = e_3(\bar{f}) = e_3(\sin \alpha) = e_3(\cos \alpha) = e_2(\kappa_1) = e_3(\kappa_1) = e_3(\sigma) = e_2(\sigma) = e_2(f_2) = 0.$$

Since  $K^{M^2} = -\bar{E}_2(\bar{f}) - \bar{f}^2 = -e_1(\bar{f}) - \bar{f}^2$ , we see that  $e_3(K^{M^2}) = e_2(K^{M^2}) = 0$ . From (24) and (59), we have  $e_2(\alpha) = e_3(\alpha) = 0$ , and a direct computation gives

$\sigma \sin \alpha = e_1(\cos \alpha) = -\sin \alpha \alpha'$ , i.e.,  $\alpha' = -\sigma = \sin \alpha \cos \alpha \bar{f}$ , where  $\alpha'$  denotes the first derivative of  $\alpha$  along  $e_1 = \bar{E}_2$ . For  $\kappa_2 = f_1 = 0$ , biharmonic equation (8) turns into (48). A further computation using Claim 1 and (50), we see that (48) turns into (49).

Finally, we show that  $(N^2, h)$  is not flat. If otherwise,  $K^N = 0$ , i.e.,  $e_1(f_2) - f_2^2 = 0$ , using the 4th equation of (5) with  $\sigma = -\bar{f} \sin \alpha \cos \alpha$ , we immediately have

$$(60) \quad K^{M^2} = -3\bar{f}^2 \sin^2 \alpha.$$

On the other hand, we know that  $M^2$  has Gauss curvature

$$(61) \quad K^{M^2} = -\bar{E}_2(\bar{f}) - \bar{f}^2 = -e_1(\bar{f}) - \bar{f}^2.$$

Using Equations (60) and (61), we obtain

$$(62) \quad \bar{f}' = 3\bar{f}^2 \sin^2 \alpha - \bar{f}^2,$$

where  $\bar{f}'$  denotes the first derivative of  $\bar{f}$  along  $e_1$ .

Substituting  $\alpha' = \sin \alpha \cos \alpha \bar{f}$  (i.e.,  $\bar{f} = \frac{\alpha'}{\sin \alpha \cos \alpha}$ ) into (62) and simplifying the resulting equation we get

$$(63) \quad \alpha'' \cos \alpha - \alpha'^2 \sin \alpha = 0.$$

One applies  $e_1$  to both sides of (63) and simplifies the resulting equation to have

$$(64) \quad \alpha''' \cos \alpha - 3\alpha' \alpha'' \sin \alpha - \alpha'^3 \cos \alpha = 0.$$

Adding (49) to a  $(-\sin \alpha \cos \alpha)$  multiple of (64) and simplifying the results with  $\alpha' \neq 0$  yields

$$(65) \quad \alpha'' \cos \alpha (4 \sin^2 \alpha + 3) + \alpha'^2 \sin \alpha (3 \cos^2 \alpha + 3) = 0.$$

Similarly, adding a  $(-4 \sin^2 \alpha - 3)$  multiple of (63) to (66) and simplifying the results gives

$$(66) \quad \alpha'^2 \sin \alpha (9 + \sin^2 \alpha) = 0,$$

it follows that  $\alpha$  is a constant, a contradiction. Then, we must have  $K^N \neq 0$ .

Summarizing all results in the above cases we obtain the theorem.  $\square$

We now give a characterization of proper biharmonic Riemannian submersions from  $M^2 \times \mathbb{R}$  by using the local coordinates as follows

**Theorem 2.9.** *If  $\pi : M^2 \times \mathbb{R} \rightarrow (N^2, h)$  is a proper biharmonic Riemannian submersion from the product space, then*

(i) The target surface is flat, and locally, up to an isometry of the domain and/or codomain,  $\pi$  is the projection of the special twisted product

$$(67) \quad \pi : (\mathbb{R}^3, e^{2p(x,y)} dx^2 + dy^2 + dz^2) \rightarrow (\mathbb{R}^2, dy^2 + dz^2), \quad \pi(x, y, z) = (y, z),$$

with  $p_y \neq 0$  being a harmonic function on  $(M^2, e^{2p(x,y)} dx^2 + dy^2)$ , i.e., it solves the PDE

$$(68) \quad \Delta p_y := p_{yyy} + p_{yy} p_y + e^{-2p(x,y)} (p_{xxy} - p_{xy} p_x) = 0.$$

or,

(ii) The target surface is non-flat, and locally, up to an isometry of the domain and/or codomain, the map can be expressed as

$$(69) \quad \begin{aligned} \pi : (\mathbb{R}^3, e^{2p(x,y)} dx^2 + dy^2 + dz^2) &\rightarrow (\mathbb{R}^2, dy^2 + e^{2\lambda(y,\phi)} d\phi^2), \\ \pi(x, y, z) &= (y, F(z - \int e^{\varphi(x)} dx)), \end{aligned}$$

where  $p(x, y) = \ln |\tan \alpha(y)| + \varphi(x)$ ,  $\lambda = \ln |\sin \alpha(y)| + w(\phi)$  with the functions  $\varphi(x)$ ,  $w(\phi)$  and nonconstant function  $F(u)$  satisfying  $F'(z - \int e^{\varphi(x)} dx) = e^{-w(\phi)}$  and  $z - \int e^{\varphi(x)} dx = \int e^{w(\phi)} d\phi$ , and  $\alpha(y)$  is the angle between the fibers of  $\pi$  and  $E_3 = \partial_z$  solving the ODE (49).

*Proof.* First of all, note that by Theorem 2.8 the local orthonormal frame  $\{e_1 = \bar{E}_2, e_2 = -\cos \alpha \bar{E}_1 + \sin \alpha \bar{E}_3, e_3 = \sin \alpha \bar{E}_1 + \cos \alpha \bar{E}_3\}$  is an adapted frame of the Riemannian submersion  $\pi$ , and that the vector field  $e_1 = \bar{E}_2$  is a geodesic vector field on  $M^2$ . It is well known that we can choose local semi geodesic coordinates  $(x, y)$  on  $M^2$  so that  $\bar{E}_1 = e^{-p(x,y)} \partial_x$ ,  $\bar{E}_2 = \partial_y$ , and the metric on  $M^2$  takes the form  $e^{2p(x,y)} dx^2 + dy^2$ . It follows that the product manifold  $M^2 \times \mathbb{R}$  can be locally represented as  $(U \times \mathbb{R} \subseteq M^2 \times \mathbb{R}, e^{2p(x,y)} dx^2 + dy^2 + dz^2)$ .

For Statement (i), since the target surface is flat, it corresponds to the Case I in the proof of Theorem 2.8, i.e., the frame  $\{e_1 = \bar{E}_2, e_2 = E_3, e_3 = \bar{E}_1\}$  is an adapted frame to the Riemannian submersion  $\pi$  with the integrability data  $\{f_1 = f_2 = \kappa_2 = \sigma = 0, \kappa_1 = -\bar{f} \neq 0\}$ . Note that, by  $\sigma = 0$  and the 4th equation of (5), the horizontal distribution of the Riemannian submersion is integrable with flat integral submanifolds. So locally, up to an isometry of the domain and/or the target manifold, the Riemannian submersion is the projection along the fibers (i.e., the integral curves of  $\bar{E}_1 = e^{-p(x,y)} \partial_x$  to the integral submanifold, and hence can be described by (67)). It is easily checked that in this case  $\kappa_1 = -\bar{f} = -p_y$  and Equation (46) reduces to (68).

For Statement (ii), Theorem 2.8 implies that in this case, the target surface is non-flat,  $\cos \alpha \neq \text{constant}$  depending only on variable  $y$ , and  $\{e_1 = \bar{E}_2, e_2 =$

$-\cos \alpha \bar{E}_1 + \sin \alpha \bar{E}_3, e_3 = \sin \alpha \bar{E}_1 + \cos \alpha \bar{E}_3\}$  is an adapted frame of the Riemannian submersion  $\pi$  with integrability data (47).

Note that the vector field  $e_1 = \bar{E}_2 = \partial_y$  is a basic vector field to the Riemannian submersion  $\pi$ . It is well known that there is a local vector field  $\varepsilon_1$  on  $(N^2, h)$  whose integral curves are geodesics on  $(N, h)$  such that  $d\pi(e_1) = \varepsilon_1$ . It follows that we can choose a local semi geodesic coordinates  $(y, \phi)$  on  $N$  so that metric takes the form  $h = dy^2 + e^{2\lambda(y, \phi)} d\phi^2$ , and the orthonormal frame  $\varepsilon_1 = \partial_y, \varepsilon_2 = e^{-\lambda} \partial_\phi$  satisfying  $d\pi(e_1) = \varepsilon_1, d\pi(e_2) = \varepsilon_2 = e^{-\lambda} \partial_\phi$ .

Summarizing the above, we conclude that in this case, up to and isometry of the domain and/or target manifold, the Riemannian submersion can be expressed as

$$(70) \quad \pi : (\mathbb{R}^3, e^{2p(x, y)} dx^2 + dy^2 + dz^2) \rightarrow (\mathbb{R}^2, h = dy^2 + e^{2\lambda(y, \phi)} d\phi^2), \quad \pi(x, y, z) = (y, \phi),$$

where  $\phi = \phi(x, y, z)$  is a function to be determined.

Now we are to determine the functions  $\phi = \phi(x, y, z)$ ,  $p(x, y)$ , and  $\lambda(y, \phi)$ .

A straightforward computation gives

$$(71) \quad F_1 \circ \pi \varepsilon_1 + F_2 \circ \pi \varepsilon_2 = [\varepsilon_1, \varepsilon_2] = -\lambda_y \varepsilon_2,$$

which implies

$$F_1 = 0, \quad F_2 = -\lambda_y.$$

Hence, we have

$$(72) \quad \lambda_y = -F_2 \circ \pi = -f_2 = \bar{f} \cos^2 \alpha = \frac{\cos \alpha \alpha'(y)}{\sin \alpha}.$$

Integrating both sides with respect to  $y$  yields

$$(73) \quad \lambda(y, \phi) = \int \frac{\cos \alpha \alpha'(y)}{\sin \alpha} dy + w(\phi) = \ln |\sin \alpha(y)| + w(\phi),$$

where  $w = w(\phi)$  is an arbitrary function on  $\phi$ .

Noting that  $p_y = \bar{f}(y) = \frac{\alpha'(y)}{\sin \alpha \cos \alpha}$  does not depend on  $x$  we have

$$(74) \quad p(x, y) = \int \bar{f}(y) dy + \varphi(x) = \int \frac{\alpha'(y)}{\sin \alpha \cos \alpha} dy + \varphi(x) = \ln |\tan \alpha(y)| + \varphi(x),$$

where  $\varphi = \varphi(x)$  is a function on  $x$ .

To determine the component function  $\phi(x, y, z)$ , we use  $e_1 = \partial_y, e_2 = -\cos \alpha e^{-p(x, y)} \partial_x + \sin \alpha \partial_z, e_3 = \sin \alpha e^{-p(x, y)} \partial_x + \cos \alpha \partial_z$ , and  $d\pi(e_1) = \varepsilon_1 = \partial_y, d\pi(e_2) = \varepsilon_2 = e^{-\lambda} \partial_\phi$ , and  $d\pi(e_3) = 0$  to have

$$(75) \quad \begin{aligned} \partial_y = \varepsilon_1 &= d\pi(e_1) = \partial_y + \phi_y \partial_\phi, \\ e^{-\lambda} \frac{\partial}{\partial \phi} = \varepsilon_2 &= d\pi(e_2) = (-\cos \alpha e^{-p(x, y)} \phi_x + \sin \alpha \phi_z) \partial_\phi, \\ 0 &= d\pi(e_3) = (\sin \alpha e^{-p(x, y)} \phi_x + \cos \alpha \phi_z) \partial_\phi. \end{aligned}$$



By comparing both sides of the 1st equation of (75), one finds that  $\phi_y = \frac{\partial \phi}{\partial y} = 0$ , which means that the function  $\phi$  does not depend on  $y$ , i.e.,  $\phi = \phi(x, z)$ .

Comparing coefficients of both sides of the 2nd and the 3rd equation of (75) separately, we get

$$(76) \quad -\cos \alpha e^{-p(x,y)} \phi_x + \sin \alpha \phi_z = e^{-\lambda}, \quad \sin \alpha e^{-p(x,y)} \phi_x + \cos \alpha \phi_z = 0.$$

Recall that  $p(x, y) = \ln |\tan \alpha(y)| + \varphi(x)$ ,  $\lambda = \ln |\sin \alpha(y)| + w(\phi)$ , and the fact that  $\phi(x, z)$  is nonconstant since  $d\pi(e_2) \neq 0$ , we use the method of the first integral to solve the 2nd PDE of (76) to have

$$(77) \quad \phi(x, z) = F \left( z - \int e^{\varphi(x)} dx \right),$$

where  $F = F(u)$  is a nonconstant differentiable function. Substituting this into the 1st PDE of (76) we have  $F'(z - \int e^{\varphi(x)} dx) = e^{-w(\phi)}$ . It follows from this and (77) that  $d\phi = dF = F' du = e^{-w(\phi)} du$  and hence  $e^{w(\phi)} d\phi = du$  implying that  $u = z - \int e^{\varphi(x)} dx = \int e^{w(\phi)} d\phi$ . This completes the proof of Statement (ii).  $\square$

Applying Theorem 2.9, we immediately have the following corollary which characterizes a proper biharmonic Riemannian submersions from a product manifold onto a non-flat surface as a special map determined up to an arbitrary function between two special warped product manifolds with the warping functions solving an ODE.

**Corollary 2.10.** *A proper biharmonic Riemannian submersion  $\pi : M^2 \times \mathbb{R} \rightarrow (N^2, h)$  from product manifold into a non-flat surface is locally, up to an isometry of the domain and/or codomain,  $\pi$  is a map between two special warped product spaces given by*

$$(78) \quad \begin{aligned} \pi : (\mathbb{R}^3, \tan^2 \alpha(y) dt^2 + dy^2 + dz^2) &\rightarrow (\mathbb{R}^2, dy^2 + \sin^2 \alpha(y) d\psi^2) \\ \pi(t, y, z) &= (y, z - t), \end{aligned}$$

where  $\alpha(y)$  is the angle between the fibers of  $\pi$  and  $E_3 = \frac{\partial}{\partial z}$  solving the ODE

$$(79) \quad \alpha''' \sin \alpha \cos^2 \alpha + \cos \alpha (\sin^2 \alpha + 3) \alpha' \alpha'' + \sin \alpha (2 \cos^2 \alpha + 3) \alpha'^3 = 0,$$

*Proof.* This follows from Statement (ii) of Theorem 2.9 and the coordinate changes  $t = \int e^{\varphi(x)} dx$ ,  $y = y$ ,  $z = z$  in the domain and  $y = y$ ,  $\psi = \int e^{w(\phi)} d\phi$  in the codomain.  $\square$

*Remark 3.* (A) Note that it follows from [1] (Corollary 3.2) that the Riemannian submersion given by the projection of the twisted product  $\pi : (\mathbb{R}^3, e^{2p(x,y,z)} dx^2 + dy^2 + dz^2) \rightarrow (\mathbb{R}^2, dy^2 + dz^2)$ ,  $\pi(x, y, z) = (y, z)$  is biharmonic if and only if  $\Delta \kappa_1 = 0, \Delta \kappa_2 = 0$ . In the case of (i) in Theorem 2.9, these reduce exactly to (68).

Thus, Statement (i) of Theorem 2.9 not just characterizes proper biharmonic Riemannian submersions from product manifold to a flat surface locally but also recovers a special result in [1] (Corollary 3.2).

(B) The biharmonicity of the Riemannian submersion defined by the projection of warped product  $\pi : (\mathbb{R}^3, e^{2p(y,z)}dx^2 + dy^2 + dz^2) \rightarrow (\mathbb{R}^2, dy^2 + dz^2)$ ,  $\pi(x, y, z) = (y, z)$  had been studied in [2, 15, 21, 12, 1].

(D) We would like to point out that, unlike in case (ii) in Theorem 2.9 and Corollary 2.10 where the function  $p(x, y)$  can be proved to be independent of  $x$  variable so the metric is of a warped product type, in case (i) the map is completely determined (to be the projection) but we do not know whether the function  $p(x, y)$  is independent of  $x$  variable or not.

When the target surface is flat, it is easy to have many examples proper biharmonic Riemannian submersions  $\pi : M^2 \times \mathbb{R} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^2$  from the projection of the warped product spaces see e.g., [2, 15, 12, 1]. For example, the following projections are proper biharmonic Riemannian submersions:

- (i)  $\pi : (\mathbb{R}^2 \times \mathbb{R}, (\cosh y)^4 dx^2 + dy^2 + dz^2) \rightarrow (\mathbb{R}^2, dy^2 + dz^2)$ ,  $\pi(x, y, z) = (y, z)$ ,
- (ii)  $\pi : (\mathbb{R}_+^2 \times \mathbb{R}, y^4 dx^2 + dy^2 + dz^2) \rightarrow (\mathbb{R}_+^2, dy^2 + dz^2)$ ,  $\pi(x, y, z) = (y, z)$ .

When the target surface is non-flat, we would like to point out that there exist many local proper biharmonic Riemannian submersions  $\pi : M^2 \times \mathbb{R} \rightarrow (N^2, h)$ . In fact, by introducing new variable  $u(\alpha) = \frac{\alpha''(y)}{\alpha'(y)^2}$ , we have  $\alpha' \alpha'' = u \alpha'^3$ ,  $\alpha''' = (u' + 2u^2)\alpha'^3$  and hence (79) reduces to a Riccati equation as

$$(80) \quad u'(\alpha) + 2u^2 + \frac{\sin^2 \alpha + 3}{\sin \alpha \cos \alpha} u + \frac{2\cos^2 \alpha + 3}{\cos^2 \alpha} = 0,$$

any solution of which gives a family of locally defined proper biharmonic Riemannian submersions  $M^2 \times \mathbb{R} \rightarrow (N^2, h)$ .

Finally, note that it was proved in [21, 22] that a proper biharmonic Riemannian submersion  $M^2(c) \times \mathbb{R}$  exists only in the case when  $c < 0$ , and  $\pi : (\mathbb{R}^3, e^{2\sqrt{-c}y}dx^2 + dy^2 + dz^2) \rightarrow (\mathbb{R}^2, dy^2 + dz^2)$ ,  $\pi(x, y, z) = (y, z)$  is an example. Now we can prove that, up to isometry, this is the only one.

**Proposition 2.11.** *A Riemannian submersion  $\pi : M^2(c) \times \mathbb{R} \rightarrow (N^2, h)$  is proper biharmonic if and only if  $c < 0$ ,  $(N^2, h)$  is flat, and, up to an isometry, the map can be expressed as  $\pi : H^2(c) \times \mathbb{R} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^2$  with  $\pi : (\mathbb{R}^3, e^{2\sqrt{-c}y}dx^2 + dy^2 + dz^2) \rightarrow (\mathbb{R}^2, dy^2 + dz^2)$ ,  $\pi(x, y, z) = (y, z)$ .*

*Proof.* Firstly, it follows from [22] that a proper biharmonic Riemannian submersion  $\pi : M^2(c) \times \mathbb{R} \rightarrow (N^2, h)$  from a product space exists only in the case:

$H^2(c) \times \mathbb{R} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^2$  with  $c < 0$ .

Secondly, by Theorem 2.8 and 2.9, we know that locally, up to an isometry of the domain and/or codomain, a proper biharmonic Riemannian submersion  $\pi : H^2(c) \times \mathbb{R} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^2$  with  $c < 0$  is expressed as

$$(81) \quad \pi : (\mathbb{R}^3, e^{2p(x,y)} dx^2 + dy^2 + dz^2) \rightarrow (\mathbb{R}^2, dy^2 + dz^2), \quad \pi(x, y, z) = (y, z),$$

and the orthonormal frame  $\{e_1 = \partial_y, e_2 = \partial_z, e_3 = e^{-p}\partial_x\}$  is adapted to the Riemannian submersion  $\pi$  with the integrability data  $f_1 = f_2 = \kappa_2 = \sigma = 0$ ,  $\kappa_1 = -p_y \neq 0$ . It is easily checked that in this case, (5) reduces to

$$(82) \quad e_1(\kappa_1) = \kappa_1^2 + c, \quad e_2(\kappa_1) = 0,$$

and biharmonic equation (8) reads

$$(83) \quad \Delta \kappa_1 = 0.$$

A straightforward computation gives

$$(84) \quad \begin{aligned} \Delta \kappa_1 &= e_1 e_1(\kappa_1) + e_3 e_3(\kappa_1) - \nabla_{e_1} e_1(\kappa_1) - \nabla_{e_2} e_2(\kappa_1) - \nabla_{e_3} e_3(\kappa_1) \\ &= e_1(\kappa_1^2 + c) + e_3 e_3(\kappa_1) - \kappa_1 e_1(\kappa_1) = e_3 e_3(\kappa_1) + \kappa_1^3 + c \kappa_1. \end{aligned}$$

Substituting (84) into (83), we have

$$(85) \quad e_3 e_3(\kappa_1) = -\kappa_1^3 - c \kappa_1.$$

Applying  $e_3$  to both sides of the 1st equation of (82) and using the fact that  $e_1 e_3(\kappa_1) = [e_1, e_3](\kappa_1) + e_3 e_1(\kappa_1)$ , we have

$$(86) \quad e_1 e_3(\kappa_1) = 3\kappa_1 e_3(\kappa_1).$$

Using (82), (85), (86), and a direct computation we get

$$(87) \quad e_1 e_3\{e_3(\kappa_1)\} - e_3 e_1\{e_3(\kappa_1)\} = [e_1, e_3]\{e_3(\kappa_1)\} = \kappa_1 e_3 e_3(\kappa_1) = -\kappa_1^4 - c \kappa_1^2,$$

and

$$(88) \quad \begin{aligned} e_1 e_3\{e_3(\kappa_1)\} - e_3 e_1\{e_3(\kappa_1)\} &= e_1\{e_3 e_3(\kappa_1)\} - e_3\{e_1 e_3(\kappa_1)\} \\ &= -c \kappa_1^2 - 4c - 3e_3^2(\kappa_1). \end{aligned}$$

Comparing (87) with (88), we get

$$(89) \quad 3e_3^2(\kappa_1) = \kappa_1^4 - 4c.$$

Applying  $e_3$  to both sides of (89) and using (85) to simplify the resulting equation we have

$$(90) \quad \kappa_1(5\kappa_1^2 + 3c)e_3(\kappa_1) = 0,$$

which implies  $e_3(\kappa_1) = 0$ . Substituting this into (85) and using that fact that  $c\kappa_1 \neq 0$  we obtain

$$(91) \quad \kappa_1^2 = -c > 0,$$

which implies that

$$(92) \quad p_y^2 = -c, \text{ (and hence) } p_y = \pm\sqrt{-c}.$$

It follows that

$$(93) \quad p(x, y) = \pm\sqrt{-c}y + \varphi(x),$$

where  $\varphi(x)$  is an arbitrary function.

So we conclude that up to an isometry of the domain and/or codomain, a proper biharmonic Riemannian submersion  $\pi : H^2(c) \times \mathbb{R} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^2$  with  $c < 0$  is expressed as

$$(94) \quad \pi : (\mathbb{R}^3, e^{2\sqrt{-c}y}dx^2 + dy^2 + dz^2) \rightarrow (\mathbb{R}^2, dy^2 + dz^2), \pi(x, y, z) = (y, z).$$

Thus, we obtain the proposition.  $\square$

*Remark 4.* By Proposition 2.11, for  $c \geq 0$ , there exists no proper biharmonic Riemannian submersion  $\pi : M^2(c) \times \mathbb{R} \rightarrow (N^2, h)$  no matter what  $(N^2, h)$  is.

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